

U.S. N.A.-Indians

A Navajo Life Saving Station.



The Good Samaritan Hospital, Indian Wells, Arizona.

Indian health conditions are of first importance. Education of the Indian and protection of his property are important, but the preservation of his health is vital. Education and property protection will not preserve the race. Better health conditions will.

The need for Indian hospitals is great among those tribes who still cling tenaciously to their primitive habits of living and their racial superstitions. Among all such tribes the medicine men exercise a powerful and an evil influence, and perhaps it is nowhere more apparent than among the great Navajo tribe of Arizona and New Mexico.

The Good Samaritan Hospital, for the Navajo Indians, was erected by The National Indian Association and its auxiliaries in the fall of 1912. It is situated in an isolated spot on the uplands of northeast Arizona, on the edge of the "painted desert," and there are large numbers of Indians scattered over

the adjacent country, living in wretched huts of logs and mud, known as "hogans." These Indians follow their occupation of sheep raising and come long distances to the hospital and dispensary for treatment. Our resident physician and surgeon also visits and treats the sick in the hogans.

Though the success of the hospital has been so marked that the influence of the medicine men has been considerably lessened, yet superstitious practices in the treatment of the sick still prevail. A mother brought her child to the hospital. It was suffering from a heavy bronchial cold; was given constant treatment during the night, and in the morning there was marked improvement in its condition. During the day the father came to the hospital in a state of agitation and fear. He said that before the child was born a sister of its mother was bitten by a snake and died, and that was the cause of the child's illness. He was sure, he said, "the white man's medicine would not do any good." The superintendent talked with him, but he insisted upon taking the child away to have a "sing" over it. A Navajo man was found who could "sing" the snake song, so they took the baby to a hogan about a mile distant, where they "sang" over it continuously that night and all the following day. The man returned to the hospital about midnight and said the child was dead.

An interesting case of an old Indian woman whose life was saved by careful treatment at the hospital is thus described by the physician:

"Chee, our regular Indian helper, went to his father's on a short visit recently. He found a medicine man there holding a 'sing' over his father's mother, an old woman one hundred and ten years of age. A goat had run one of its horns nearly through her left hand and blood poison had set in. Chee at once sent the medicine man away. When he came back and told me of the condition of his grandmother, I suggested that he should go and bring her to the hospital and we would make an effort to save her life. He returned home for her and found that the medicine man had again exerted his power and extorted a horse, a valuable gun and several head of sheep from his victims, as pay for his 'medicine,' and was continuing his incantations. Chee prevailed with his father to bring the old woman to the hospital.

When they arrived she was so weak and emaciated that she could hardly get into the office. The medicine man had burned some kind of plant and sprinkled the ashes and charcoal from it all over the old woman's body and in her hair and face, until one could scarcely tell what her original color was. It took Mrs. Moore almost an hour to remove the soot and ashes. We found the wounded hand all involved. The entire back of the hand from near the wrist joint to the knuckles and from the thumb to the little finger had sloughed away; the pus had followed the course of the tendons, and there were ugly openings between the fingers and at the base of the thumb. I dressed the hand and gave the patient a full dose of combined vaccine and an opiate, as she had not slept for nearly two weeks. Though she was in such a dangerous condition and there seemed little hope of saving her life, she has now passed the danger point, and after ten days of careful treatment is on the road to recovery. She eats heartily, sleeps well, is cheerful, sits up, walks around in the ward, laughs and talks. If no complications set in she will be entirely recovered in two weeks. Every day Chee reads to her from a copy of Genesis in the Navajo language, and she seems to take great interest in the Bible stories."

Later, the doctor wrote: "Our old Indian woman whom we have had as a patient has recovered sufficiently to be sent home. A large number of the Indians called to talk with her during the past two weeks. This one case alone has led many of them to realize that the practices of their medicine men are of no avail."

The Good Samaritan Hospital is a Christian institution. In addition to the healing of the body, patients hear, often for the first time, the story of God's love for them.

During the three years since the hospital has been open, more than 5,800 treatments have been given in the wards, in the dispensary, in a tuberculosis tent, and in the Navajo hogans.

Many severe cases of trachoma, where the eyesight has been almost gone, have been treated successfully at the hospital. But there are other diseases and injuries each day needing medical attention and surgical skill.

No other medical station is within reach of large numbers of these Indians.

The Hospital has no endowment, but is supported entirely by voluntary gifts. The cost of the running expenses is \$4,300 a year. At present the Hospital cannot be carried on at its full capacity, owing to a lack of means.

We need at once:

\$2,000 for current expenses of men's and women's wards.

\$200 for current expenses of an emergency room, recently equipped.

Your contribution is urgently solicited. Cheques may be made payable to Miss Anna Bennett, Treasurer, and sent to her, or to John W. Clark, Executive Secretary of The National Indian Association, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

April, 1916.



A Navajo Hogan.